The Elhew Field Station (named in honor of Mr. Robert G. Wehle's prestigious Elhew Kennel) is a new facility dedicated to supporting sound land stewardship principles and promoting the understanding and appreciation of Alabama's natural heritage through research, conservation, and outreach initiatives. It is a component of the State Lands Division's Wehle Land Conservation Center in southeast Bullock County and provides the infrastructure necessary to achieve this mission.

Elhew Field Station program operations began in March 2011 and have focused on developing/implementing supporting initiatives. Core objectives include: 1) establishing a base of operations for a statewide avian conservation program, 2) developing partnerships with other conservation/academic entities focusing on avian conservation and awareness, 3) developing and implementing conservation outreach programs on the Wehle Forever Wild Tract, 4) fostering avian research opportunities with academia on the Wehle Tract/Barbour WMA and other Forever Wild lands, and 5) participating in professional meetings and technical work groups as a partner for larger state and regional conservation planning initiatives.

This program will provide examples of each of the aforementioned objectives and some of its achievements during its short existence. Also, time will be dedicated to discussing potential opportunities to partner with BAS and develop an annual workshop focusing on southeast Alabama's natural heritage.

Biographical Information:

Eric Soehren attended Jacksonville State University in northeast Alabama for both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Biology. He has been with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's State Lands Division since 1997 as a zoologist and now manages the Elhew Field Station (EFS) in Bullock County; a new facility of the Wehle Land Conservation Center. One of Eric's primary responsibilities at the EFS is administering a statewide Avian Conservation Center, which focuses on developing and coordinating several avian research and monitoring programs on conservation lands to help address management needs of birds. Other tasks include developing partnerships to provide educational and short course opportunities for target audiences and the public, conducting field surveys for rare and poorly known faunal species, and coordinating conservation outreach at the Wehle Land Conservation Center. Most of his fieldwork is performed on lands acquired through Alabama's Forever Wild Land Trust Program. Eric is also actively involved with several non-profit conservation organizations including the Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS), Alabama Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ALAPARC) and the Inland Bird Banding Association (IBBA). He and his wife Jennifer reside in Macon County with their son Ethan and twin daughters Emma and Elise.
SoSo for the Record

Sightings from the field

3 December through 23 December, 2011

A few Christmas Bird Count results have trickled in:

From Waterloo, 19 December, Paul Kittle reports that 104 species were counted, slightly higher than usual. A record high CBC number was recorded for ten species based on individual/party hours.

The Wheeler Refuge count 17 December, (according to Dwight Cooley), had 122 species. Common Merganser (7), Rough-legged Hawk, and Le Conte’s Sparrow (2), were some of the highlights.

Greg Harber and his birding cohorts had the pleasure of watching a displaying American Woodcock on the Birmingham count, 23 December. This, not often seen, bird was added at Ruffner Mountain thanks to Scot Duncan who had discovered it a few days before the count.

Other sightings were:

12/3  Calliope Hummingbird, (First year female, banded by FB); Atmore (JY).
12/6  Purple Finch; Pine Siskin; Clay (BS,MS).
12/10 Hooded Merganser (15); American White Pelican (30); Near Logan Martin Dam (RC).
12/11 Brown Creeper; Homewood (KA).
12/14 Barred Owl (banded); Clay (BS, MS).
12/19 Pileated Woodpecker; Oak Mountain State Park (KK).
12/21 Black-chinned Hummingbird (banded by BS, MS); Northport (BD).

Contributors:  Ken Archambault
               Fred Bassett
               Ross Cohen
               Dwight Cooley
               Barbara Dale
               Scot Duncan
               Greg Harber
               Karen Kendall
               Paul Kittle
               Ken Marion
               Hans Paul
               Bob and Martha Sargent
               Helena Uber-Wamble
               Jon Yoder

Please submit sightings for March FF at least five days before the February 1st deadline to: Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209
Audubon Teaches Nature

Great Backyard Bird Count ~ Citizen Science You Can Do!

Presented by: Greg Harber
Sunday, February 19, 2012, 2:00 P.M.
Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park

Citizen science projects involve data collection by ordinary citizens who have an interest in contributing to the study at hand. Sometimes the data, usually observational in nature, is entered into an online database or is mailed to the sponsoring organization or academic institution. Among the more popular of these projects is the long-running Great Backyard Bird Count.

The GBBC is an annual event enjoyed by many, and what's not to like? We get to watch birds - our favorite activity - and be a citizen scientist too! The dates for this year's count are February 17-20, 2012.

In today's seminar we'll take a moment to outline the purpose and the methodology of the bird count, and then go into the field to conduct our survey. Afterwards we'll return to the auditorium at the Alabama Wildlife Center to enter our data online.

The GBBC spans a 4-day period during the weekend, thus allowing attendees a day to observe and record the birds at their own feeder or local park, and enter the data into an account on the GBBC that they create for themselves. This will be a good opportunity for teachers and educators to learn how they can teach their students to be scientists too!

Audubon Mountain Workshop Announced

Alpine Camp, Mentone, AL
May 10-13, 2012

Make your plans now to join your family and friends for four days of fun, learning and relaxation at the Audubon Mountain Workshop, to be held May 10-13, 2012. This will be our 35th year! Once again, Alpine Camp for Boys will host our workshop at their beautiful campus on the banks of the Little River across from DeSoto State Park.

Workshop participants have the opportunity to take classes (3 hours in length) covering a wide variety of topics, such as: birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects, geology and astronomy, trees and shrubs, wildflowers, forest and stream ecology and mountain crafts. Experts teach all of the classes and most are taught in the field.

In addition to the adult-oriented classes there will be a Young Naturalist's Program for children ages 5-12. During class time our experienced staff closely monitors the children while their parents/guardians are enjoying their own classes. This arrangement offers a wonderful opportunity for young families and/or grandparents and grandchildren to spend quality time together in the camp's idyllic surroundings. Either way, it is fun for all ages!

Your registration fee covers the cost of tuition, room and all meals. Participants are housed in rustic, one-room cabins and the camp staff will serve us three square meals a day in the dining hall. The Gym will serve as our main classroom and Alpine Lodge as our gathering place, library and canteen.

Look for the Audubon Mountain Workshop brochure inserted in this newsletter and send in your registration today. Then kick back and relax in the rocking chairs on the back porch of Alpine Lodge, and let the soothing sounds of the wind, the water and the woods fill your mind and renew your spirit.

Our next seminar in the series:

Bluebirds Among Us ~ The John Finlay Bluebird Trail
Sunday, March 18th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Patsy Scott, Guest Speaker
February Field Trips

Lake Guntersville & Surrounding Area
February 4, 2012 - 7:00 a.m.

Lake Guntersville is one of the premier birding sites in the state for observing waterfowl and raptors in winter. During the morning we will make several stops around Guntersville Lake to view ducks, grebes, gulls, coots, cormorants and other water birds. If we are lucky to have good sunshine, you can enjoy some amazing colors and plumage patterns of ducks up close with a scope. We will enjoy a picnic lunch along the Guntersville waterfront.

Following lunch we will have a couple of birding options available to us: a trip to Guntersville lock and dam, where nesting Bald Eagles are certain to be crowd pleasers. As of this writing we are also trying to arrange a visit to the adjacent “Hawk Farm,” which has hosted a variety of interesting raptors in recent years. A visit to the state park will provide an up close view of the damage and subsequent recovery from the April tornadoes that ripped through Alabama.

Travel Plans: We will depart at 7:00 a.m. from the parking lot of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, located at 2612 Lane Park Road Birmingham, AL 35223. The group will caravan up AL-79 North to Guntersville and stop at the McDonald’s in Guntersville around 8:30 a.m. for coffee, biscuits, and a rest room break. If you would like to meet us at the McDonald’s, turn left at the intersection of AL-79 and US-431, go a few blocks and McDonald’s will be on your left after the fork in the road. The address is 1745 Gunter Avenue, 35976.

Be sure to have a full tank of gas, your favorite picnic lunch, drinks, binoculars and a birding scope if you have one. Dress for the predicted weather and bring some extra warm clothing, as Guntersville can be much colder than Birmingham.

Trip leaders: Ty Keith (602-8037) and Susan Barrow (253-8667).

Tom Imhof Family Bird Walk/Great Backyard Bird Count,
In Partnership with the Birmingham Zoo - Half-day Field Trip
February 18, 2012 - 8:00 a.m.

For years the Birmingham Audubon Society has held a family-oriented bird walk in memory of long-time member Tom Imhof. Beginning at 8:00 a.m. we will gather at the Children’s Zoo Entrance gate and depart from there on our walk, with members of the Birmingham Audubon Society and Birmingham Zoo bird curators serving as our expert guides to help with bird identification.

The route will take us through the zoo, stopping in the Alabama Wilds and the water retention basin area where we are likely to see a variety of winter visitors and resident birds, and perhaps some shorebirds too. We’ll record our findings as we go, for reasons you’ll soon understand.

It is no coincidence that we have scheduled this bird walk for the same weekend as the Great Backyard Bird Count. Besides the National Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count, the GBBC is one of the better known “citizen science” projects that relies on ordinary citizens to gather and submit data on birds. At the conclusion of the bird walk the data will be entered into the GBBC database.

As noted on the GBBC website (http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/), the Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event.

It’s free, fun, and easy - and it helps the birds.

Additionally, the Birmingham Zoo will hold a variety of bird related activities for children following the bird walk. You and your children or grandchildren are sure to enjoy themselves as we search for our fine-feathered friends, and you’ll learn a thing or two about the GBBC process along the way. Make your plans now to join us.

Visit the zoo web site for further information: http://www.birminghamzoo.com/

Trip Plans: Meet at the Birmingham Zoo’s Children’s Zoo Entrance gate at 8:00 a.m.

Trip Leaders: Greg Harber (251-2133), and Jamie Nobles (Zoo staff).

BAS Field Trip Cancellation Policy
If there is a possibility of dangerous road conditions due to inclement weather please contact the trip leader at the phone number provided.
Ornithologists Want YOU!
By Shirley Farrell

Have you ever wanted to be a REAL scientist? Do you like conducting REAL experiments, not just schoolwork? Want to share your REAL results with others? Have I got a surprise for you! On February 17-20, 2012, you will have your chance to help bird scientists, or ornithologists. The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count will provide bird watchers of all ages the opportunity to be REAL scientists. This bird count provides a snapshot of the bird species seen during this four-day window. By participating you are helping scientists collect data. As a matter of fact you are a scientist collecting the data to help other scientists analyze it. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society sponsor this project and use the data to understand what is happening to birds all over the United States. Scientists and students all over the world can access and analyze the information, or data.

Last year 1,178 bird lists were reported. There could have been more than one person adding to each list. The city with the most bird lists was Birmingham with 218 and the next top city was Fultondale with 101 bird lists. Bird watchers in Alabama reported 164 species of birds during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Do you want to know why Fultondale has so many bird watchers during this count? Mrs. Debbie Dumais, teacher at Fultondale Elementary School, encourages the students at her school to watch the birds at their homes and report them. You could have your teacher check out the web site (http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) and watch the birds at school.

To participate, all you have to do is watch and report birds that you see during these four days. You don’t even have to report all the birds you see. If you are not sure what a bird is, you just check the box on the report form “Not all species seen are reported”.

1. **Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.** You can count each day or just some of the days and you can count in different places. Just be sure to keep a separate list of birds for each day and each location.

2. **For each type of bird you see, count the most you see at any one time.** For example, maybe you see two chickadees when you start watching, then five chickadees a few minutes later. The number you put on your list for chickadees is five. Do **not** add two plus five. (This way you don't accidentally count the same bird twice.)

3. **Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site!** Then watch the maps as more and more people enter their reports.

That's it! Now get ready to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count because when it comes to watching birds, **kids count!**

For a variety of birdy activities visit:
http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/kids

We are looking for artists and writers: Send us your pictures, journal pages, stories and poems about birds, nature, wildlife, etc. If selected, your original work will be published in the Flicker Flashes.

Do you have any suggestions as to what you would like to read about in Kid's Corner? Send your ideas to:

Birmingham Audubon Society
c/o McWane Science Center
Attn: Kids Corner
200 19th Street North
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117
Audubon Education Flies High
By Helena Uber-Wamble

After a really successful and busy fall calendar of educational sessions serving over 1,000 students, I am pumped up and ready for a full spring schedule. January kicked off with several reserved programs at the McWane Science Center and the second family bird walk that went out to Wheeler Wildlife Refuge.

February brings the Great Backyard Bird Count that starts on February 17th and goes through the 20th. This is a great opportunity for you to count the birds in your backyard and send your information in to the main data base so scientists can get a snapshot of birds across many areas in one day. This important information is used to monitor influxes of bird populations and where they might be spending their winters. It is a great way to introduce your children to the value of collecting data and make them a “scientist” for the day without leaving your own yard. We also host a walk at the Birmingham Zoo to help you learn the birds and to show you how to enter the data once you have your own count done.

In March we head back to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens where we will lead school groups of children on a bird walk every Monday and Friday. This is a very effective and powerful experience as students learn to use binoculars and they also learn about the birds found there. These birds are also ones that the students and adults may see in their own backyard. We run these Bird Walks through May and they last an hour each with two tours being given each day. We have had many great experiences over the past few months, with hawks flying in and perching on fence rails as we watch, hummingbirds eating constantly in the fall before their migration further south, and mockingbirds mobbing a hawk too. Plenty of Cardinals, Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees visit us on these trips as we walk through the woodlands and the bog.

This year, we will be partnering with Ruffner Mountain in April for a Bird Festival. Students from around the county will be asked to participate in a bird art contest, participants will be able to build a bird water feature and see raptors up close. We will give you more details about this as we get closer, but mark April 14, on your calendar so you can come to a fun-filled day.

None of these programs would be a success without the dedication and participation of many volunteers. I am happy to say that I have a very wonderful group of people who believe like me that when you teach a person about something, like birds, it gives it value. It brings the person closer to nature because they begin to love and appreciate that which is around them. When people learn about something they appreciate it and when they appreciate it, they begin to have an understanding and love for it and when people love something, they will treasure and protect it. My volunteers share their love and appreciate for the birds around them by passing along their enthusiasm during these programs. If you would like to volunteer for any of the upcoming events, please call the Birmingham Audubon office at 205-714-8228 and I will give you further information. I look forward to our busy spring and can’t wait for all of us to be out there bird watching with the students again. Don’t miss out on all the fun!

Happy Birding!
Helena

BAS Education Department Wish List

If you have any of the following items that you could donate to BAS, please call Helena Uber-Wamble at 714-8228

• 2nd edition National Geographic field guides
• Old bird magazines and or calendars to cut up and use for programming
~ Membership Application ~
Birmingham Audubon Society/National Audubon Society*

☐ Birmingham Audubon Society
New Members and Renewals $20.00
Seniors (62 or better) $15.00
Full-time Students $15.00

Make check payable to: Birmingham Audubon Society
Send application and check to:
Birmingham Audubon Society
c/o McWane Science Center
200 19th Street North
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117

☐ National Audubon Society
New Members* $20.00
Seniors (62 or better) $15.00
Full-time Students $15.00
* NAS will contact you directly for membership renewal

Make check payable to: National Audubon Society
Send application and check to:
National Audubon Society
c/o McWane Science Center
200 19th Street North
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________
City, State and Zip code: _________________________________________________
Phone: (      ) ______________________  Email: ______________________________

☐ I want to opt-out of receiving a printed copy of Flicker Flashes (please provide us with your email address)

My check for $___________ is enclosed.

Phone: (205) 714-8227

Birmingham Audubon Society is tax exempt under 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code

* There are two ways to become a member of Birmingham Audubon Society:

1. Join Birmingham Audubon Society without National Audubon Society affiliation. This chapter only membership provides you access to all chapter activities and benefits. All dues stay in Birmingham to support local activities. You will not receive the National Audubon magazine.

2. Join National Audubon Society. Birmingham Audubon Society serves as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Joining National Audubon Society also provides you a membership to Birmingham Audubon Society and access to all chapter activities and benefits. You will receive the National Audubon magazine. Your dues support the work of National Audubon Society and a small percentage of your first year dues are returned to the Birmingham Audubon Society for local efforts.

BAS Membership/Flicker Flashes/E-Mail Questionnaire

1. Would you like to opt-out of receiving printed copies of Flicker Flashes? _____ Yes _____ No (If yes, please consider allowing us to put you on our email list. Your email address will NOT be shared with anyone!)

2. Would you like to be included on our email list? _____ Yes _____ No (If yes, please provide your email address on the form above)

Responses can be submitted as follows:
Via mail (preferred) – enter your personal information above (on the membership application), check your preferences to the two questions above and mail this entire page to the BAS office at the address listed above.
Via email – email the information requested above to: Audubon@mcwane.org
Via phone – call the BAS office (714-8227) and provide the information requested above.

Your input is valued and we want to encourage you to return this survey so that we can better serve you as a BAS member!
Birmingham Audubon Society  
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Mailing Address:  
Birmingham Audubon Society  
c/o McWane Science Center  
200 19th Street North  
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117

Email: Audubon@McWane.org  
Web Site: www.birminghamaudubon.org

Administrative Director: (205) 714-8227  
Education Director: (205) 714-8228  
Bird Reporting Line: (205) 879-7709

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Copies of Flicker Flashes can be viewed and downloaded from the BAS web site: www.birminghamaudubon.org